

Knowing of your interest in immigration issues, I thought you might be interested in legislation I recently co-sponsored to strengthen the enforcement of our current laws.

I am deeply concerned that illegal immigration into the United States has reached all-time highs in recent years, with an estimated ten to fifteen million such illegal aliens currently residing in our country. Some illegal immigrants engage in further criminal conduct, such as drug trafficking and gang violence. While there are many factors contributing to the prevalence of illegal immigration, one major problem is the lack of information sharing between local law enforcement officials and the federal agencies charged with enforcing our nation's immigration laws.

It is for this reason that I joined as an original cosponsor of the CLEAR Act. H.R. 3494, introduced by Tennessee Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn in September 2007, would clarify that local and state law enforcement agencies have the inherent authority to detain criminal and illegal aliens within the course of their regular duty. It creates a new category in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for any and all violators of immigration law with the goal that the information will be readily accessible to every local police officer. And it provides local governments that assist in the enforcement immigration laws with additional resources, including access to State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) funding.

Many provisions in the CLEAR Act were included in legislation that passed the House with a strong bipartisan majority in 2006. Unfortunately, these immigration enforcement bills were never considered by the Senate. Although I am not a member of the House Committee on the Judiciary, which has jurisdiction over H.R. 3494, I will continue to strongly support this and other bills to enforce the law and apprehend illegal immigrants who commit crimes.